



ALEX SILL

Video Masterclass Pt1

In the first of a six-part video series, Protocol's fusion maestro Alex Sill showcases the secrets of his style by demonstrating a stunning solo over a brand new track. **Jon Bishop** is your guide.

ABILITY RATING

Advanced ★★★★★

Info

Key Various Tempo 104bpm

Will improve your... ✓ Switching between tonalities
✓ Rock and fusion soloing ✓ Use of semiquaver syncopation

The difficulty goes up a notch or six (!) this month as we begin a six-part video soloing series with Alex Sill, guitarist from fusion drummer Simon Phillips' band, Protocol (Alex follows Andy Timmons and Greg Howe). In part one we examine a new Jason Sidwell track entitled *Rebel With A Cause*, over which Alex blazes.

Alex's solo is considerably advanced and will take time to digest, but your efforts will be repaid. While the notation and rhythms look intimidating in places, the phrases are often centred around creating a strong melody and outlining the underlying chords/harmony.

A key aspect is Alex opens and later restates a memorable melodic statement. This provides a solid platform for his improvisation later and a musical component for listeners to latch onto. To get more mileage out of his initial melodic idea, Alex repeats the phrase up an octave, a classic improvisational concept; check out Joe Satriani who does this a lot. Overall the combination of sophisticated phrasing, clever note choices and a rich overdriven tone makes this piece ideal for medium/long term study. The backing track and chord chart are included, in addition to a full transcription of Alex's performance from the video.

Despite this one's advanced technical and harmonic content, there's bound to be numerous new techniques, licks or phrases to excite you. If you find one you like then memorise and/or alter it so it becomes your



Still in his 20s
Alex Sill is already
a monster player

own. Then, once you have mastered some of the concepts in Alex's solo, why not try creating a solo of your own over Jason's vibrant track? Can you dream up a melody (head) and then improvise and build on it, as Alex has?

As usual for our artist video features, we have tabbed out playing examples after the soloing performance so you have get an insight into how he functions.

As Alex explains, large sections of the piece feature a Gm11 chord context so he suggests a

Bb Major 9 arpeggio is a useful 'ingredient' to solo with. The Bbmaj9 arpeggio contains the notes Bb-D-F-A-C and we have tabbed out Alex's fingering for this in Example 1. The reason Bbmaj9 works well is if you take away the G root note, Bbmaj9 has the same notes as Gm11. In Example 2, the notation shows how Alex demonstrates a fundamental Bbmaj9 arpeggio. Alex then outlines the concept of extending the fretboard with Bbmaj9 in Examples 3, 4 and 5. Focused practice on extending arpeggio fingerings like this creates more options and establishes a very useful roadmap from which to outline Gm11. In many ways, it's evocative of Larry Carlton's 'super arpeggio' soloing approach he favoured in his early career. Back then, Larry would consider various higher triads that would suit a chord; for a Gm7 chord he may opt for Bb, Dm, C and/or Am arpeggios during a phrase.

For the final Example 6, Alex adds the E Natural as a passing tone. The E is the #11 (#4) of Bb Lydian (Bb C D E F G A) but functions as the Major 6 for G Minor. This ultimately creates a refreshing Dorian sounding G Minor 13 tonality (G A Bb C D E F).

Have fun until part two next issue!

Get the Tone

Alex used his Kiesel 'Little Bastard' headless guitar (bridge pickup) into a Fender Deluxe Reverb '65 Reissue amplifier. His rich distortion is courtesy of a Tube Screamer set at 8 into a RAT pedal set at 3 for extra colour. Reverb is from his MXR Reverb, set at 4. To duplicate this tone, use a bridge humbucker and a smooth overdriven tone with plenty of sustain and be prepared to experiment with the guitar's controls to achieve the desired sound. Add ambient reverb for a sophisticated studio touch.

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